

Celebrating WETLANDS

World Wetlands Day, February 2

Wetlands & Tourism

Wetlands in the Goulburn Broken Catchment

Over 2000 wetlands have been recorded in the Goulburn Broken Catchment and are a unique part of the landscape. They include small alpine bogs, floodplain billabongs, River Red Gum forests, large open lakes and shallow seasonal swamps.

Wetlands are among the most productive ecosystems on earth supporting distinctive plant and animal communities. Wetlands also perform many vital functions including water purification, erosion control, flood mitigation, nutrient recycling and groundwater recharge. Many wetlands in the Goulburn Broken region are also popular for tourism and recreational activities. These include Barmah National Park, Kinnairds Wetland, Tahbilk Lagoon, Winton Wetlands and Yea Wetlands.

Barmah National Park

Barmah National Park is a large 28,500ha floodplain wetland located on the River Murray east of Echuca. Along with the adjoining Murray Valley Regional and National Parks in New South Wales, the Barmah-Millewa forest forms the largest River Red Gum forest in the world and is recognised as a wetland of international significance under the Ramsar Convention.

The Park is ecologically important because of its sheer expanse of River Red Gum trees and the habitat it provides for a diverse range of plants and animals, particularly colonial-nesting waterbirds. Camping and walking are popular along the 112km frontage to the Murray River along with fishing for Murray cod and Golden perch. Boating, canoeing and eco boat cruises are popular on the Murray River, Barmah Lake and adjoining creeks. Swimming can be enjoyed at the numerous sandy river bend beaches and there are opportunities to learn about local indigenous occupation and European settlement.

For further information on Barmah National Park call Parks Victoria on 13 19 63 or visit www.parks.vic.gov.au.

Kinnairds Wetland

Kinnairds Wetland is near Numurkah, about 20 minutes north of Shepparton. It covers an area of nearly 100ha of natural and constructed wetland. The wetland is at the terminal end of the Muckatah Depression and acts as a filter for the Broken Creek. Its diverse woodland and wetland habitats provide for a vast number of birds that utilise the area as a breeding and feeding site.

One hundred and fifty species of birds have been recorded at the site including Brolga, Bitterns and international visitors such as Latham's snipe. Kinnairds Wetland has a range of boardwalks, interactive signage, bird hides, picnic areas, and constructed trails suitable for walking and cycling. This gives visitors a variety of opportunities to enjoy the wetland's diverse habitat and wildlife.

For further information on Kinnairds Wetland please call the Moira Shire on (03) 5871 9222 or visit www.moira.vic.gov.au.

Tahbilk Lagoon

Tahbilk Lagoon is one of the region's most picturesque wetlands, located 10km south-west of Nagambie within the grounds of Tahbilk Winery.

The lagoon is an old meander of the Goulburn River and is approximately 8 km long and holds water all year round. The lagoon is home to the endangered Broad-shelled Turtle, approximately 200 bird species, the largest Watershield (a native water lily) population in Victoria, and a variety of native fish including a significant breeding population of the endangered Freshwater catfish. Eco boat cruises, bird hides, and more than 4km of walking trails and boardwalks provide visitors with a terrific opportunity to enjoy the areas natural beauty.

For further information on Tahbilk Lagoon please call Tahbilk Winery on (03) 5794 2555 or visit www.tahbilk.com.au.

Winton Wetlands

Winton Wetlands Reserve is a series of wetlands and woodlands covering 8,750ha located along the Hume Highway between Benalla and Wangaratta.

In 2004, the Victorian Government moved to decommission Lake Mokoan as part of the Our Water Our Future white paper policy and restore the area to a more natural wetland. The wetland restoration project is now the largest in the southern hemisphere. The wetlands cover 3,500ha within the reserve and contain a number of small and large wetlands varying from open water, Cane-grass, River Red Gum and Plains Grassy Woodlands.

The wetlands are home to a variety of significant international and national birds including Latham's snipe, the White-bellied Sea Eagle, Freckled Ducks and Brolga. With work on the reserve's Master Plan due for completion over the coming months, it's an exciting time in the development of the Winton Wetlands.

For further information visit the Winton Wetlands website www.wintonwetlands.org.au.

Yea Wetlands

The Yea Wetlands occupy 16ha of crown land on the Yea River floodplain. A short walk from the town centre, the wetlands include interpretive signs, boardwalks, a suspension bridge, free bbq and picnic areas.

The wetlands are renowned for being home to the endangered damselfly *Hemiphysalia mirabilis*, described by scientists as a 'living fossil'. This damselfly is unique as it exhibits primitive features and only exists in three locations within Victoria. Yea wetlands are also home to a number of birds including the beautiful Sacred Kingfisher. A \$2m multifunctional tourist information and wetland interpretive centre will open in early 2014 providing visitors an opportunity to learn about wetland ecology within the State and the Murray Darling Basin's freshwater resources.

Visitors to the area can enjoy bird watching, picnicking and bushwalking at the wetlands. For further information on Yea Wetlands visit www.yeawetlands.org.au.

What is World Wetlands Day?

People across the Goulburn Broken region are urged to visit a local wetland to help celebrate World Wetlands Day. World Wetlands Day is celebrated internationally each year on 2 February and marks the anniversary of the Ramsar Convention signing in 1971. The international theme for World Wetlands Day 2012 is Wetlands and Tourism – a great experience. For more information on the Ramsar Convention and World Wetlands Day please visit the Ramsar website www.ramsar.org.



The Goulburn Broken CMA is developing an iPhone app on frogs, so keep a lookout for its release in the next couple of months.

When visiting wetlands

Some things you can do when visiting wetlands so everyone can enjoy them include:

- Keep pets under control (prohibited in National Parks)
- Take your rubbish with you
- Keep to walking and vehicle tracks
- Camp at least 20 metres away from the water's edge
- Avoid disturbing wildlife
- Don't remove or damage plants

For more information please contact Goulburn Broken Catchment Management Authority on (03) 5820 1100 or via email at reception@gbcma.vic.gov.au

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FREE 2012 wetland calendars are available from Goulburn Broken CMA offices in Shepparton, Benalla, Tatura and Yea.

